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ABSTRACT

For purposes of analysis, preschool language programs can be sorted into four general categories according to the dominant type of learning activity (1) Pattern practice, (2) Cognitive verbalization, (3) Discussion, (4) Role play. Along with definitions of language, the program types differ in the kinds of interactions which occur between teacher and child and among children themselves. The kind of interaction a program promotes should be a key feature in choosing a published package for preschool use. It is important to know exactly the kind of learning relationships that are being rewarded and whether they are the kind of learning behaviors the school wishes to foster. Other major points of comparison among programs come from inspection of the teacher's guide. Programs differ in the amount of organization and sequencing provided for the teacher and they also vary in the amount of detailed information given to guide the teacher. The single most important factor in choosing a program seems to be whether the teacher is able to spend the 15 to 30 minutes per day carrying out the recommended classroom procedures. Four charts identify specific programs, materials, learning activities and types of teachers' guides analyzed for this study. [Filmed from best available copy.] (WY)

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An Analysis of Published Preschool Language Programs*

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An Analysis of Published Preschool Language Programs

Almost all the preschool programs which we have been talking about today are becoming available in commercial editions. Bereiter and Engelmann are represented by Engelmann's Distar program. The structured-cognitive and structured-environment programs are represented in this report by Celia Lavatelli's work and parts of the New Nursery School program, but in addition - David Weikart is about to publish a teacher's guide for his cognitive program and Merle Karnes will publish a version of her ameliorative program. There is also a Bank Street program - although one should always be cautious about attributing the Bank Street philosophy to <u>any</u> set of <u>pre</u>-planned packaged materials. There are other programs as well, all listed on Chart One.

I'm going to talk about these programs in two ways. <u>First</u>, I'll attempt to describe and group them. Then, I'll compare their <u>definitions</u> of language and some of their teaching procedures. And in the process, I'll raise a few questions which - it seems to me - ought to be considered before any of these programs is actually purchased.

Different programs make different <u>kinds</u> of demands on teachers. As I describe the programs - it might be useful for you to think about the different <u>teaching skills</u> involved in each.

The programs can be sorted into four general categories according to the dominant type of learning activity: for convenience, I've labeled them <u>pattern practice</u>, <u>cognitive verbalization</u>, <u>discussion</u>, and <u>role play</u>.

You probably know the <u>pattern practice</u> program best in its Bereiter-Engelmann version, but there are others on the market: Language Lotto, the Frost program, Oral English, the ALAP program and much of the Peabody program. The format is simple: the teacher provides a language model which the child must first imitate and then practice in a variety of situations. Everything is sequenced and highly specific. For example - this lesson, designed to teach multiple <u>attributes</u>, <u>tall and full</u>.

> The teacher points to the bottles. She says, "What are these?" The children answer, "These are bottles." The teacher calls on one child: "Find the bottles that are tall. Everybody, tell me about these bottles."

Then she points to a bottle: "Is this bottle tall? Is this bottle full? Say the whole thing." The children say: "This bottle is tall and full."

There are two types of pattern programs: in one type the child is permitted to give only verbal responses. The teacher handles the materials - she shows the pictures, demonstrates the concepts and asks questions. The children listen, answer questions and repeat the patterns - but there is virtually no physical activity. These programs include: Distar, Frost and to some extent, the ALAP program. In the second type of program, there are physical things for the child to do: he uses pantomime, he demonstrates different kinds of actions; he arranges objects to illustrate a preposition, such as over or under; he groups objects and pictures to show that he understands different attributes; and so forth. Language pattern programs of this type include Peabody, Oral English and Language Lotto. (See chart three.)

Related to these is a second type of program which I call cognitive verbalization. There are two components: first, the child is asked to solve a set of problems designed to develop his cognitive processes. Whatever these processes might be in reality, in a preschool language program they generally include certain basic mathematical and logical understandings: the concept of number; space relationships; classification; measurement; and so forth. When the child has solved the problem, he is then asked to verbalize his solution usually according to a pattern provided by the teacher. The material is sequenced and very specific. (In this respect - these programs resemble the pattern practice ones.) For example, this lesson designed to develop classification skills:

The teacher distributes a set of materials to each child. She asks: "What do you find in your envelop? Tell me what each object is." (The children name the things.) She says: "I want you to put the trucks in one dish and the things not trucks in the other dish. You must put everything in one dish or the other." As the children proceed, she says: "Tell me what you are doing. What are you putting in one dish? And what are you putting in the other dish?" Etc.

Programs of this type include Lavatelli's Piaget program, large portions of the New Nursery School, the Matrix Games and a few sections of the Peabody program. (See chart three.)

A third type of program is what I call the discussion-based program. Here, the teacher reads stories, plays records, presents pictures - all of which are designed to elicit conversation from the child. The key word here is interest: the materials are supposed to be interesting enough to elicit language. The teacher can and does structure the discussion with appropriate questions. She also supplies language models when necessary but the material is not as pre-sequenced and not as specific as in the other programs. The child is generally asked to identify the objects and concepts illustrated in the material and to show his understanding by relating them to his own past experience. He's also asked to recall or predict a sequence of events; discuss character's motivation; summarize a story; develop a generalization. (These are not too different from the traditional preschool reading readiness activities.)

In this example - the teacher and children are talking about a picture: The teacher says: "Jimmy saw the boys who are going to play baseball. Do you see them, Donny? What are they going to do with the baseballs and bats?" Wait for response. "Yes, they are going to throw the balls, and hit with the bats, and catch the balls."

"Who plays baseball?" Wait for response and then echo the children's answers. "Yes, bog boys play baseball, and big brothers, and big men, too. Do ladies play baseball? Do girls? Do you?"

The best known program of this type is probably Bank Street; but there are others: one by Benefic Press and one by Bowmar. For some reason, all three programs happen to deal with social studies content, but they might just as well be about science or cooking or whatever. (See chart three.)

Finally, there is the role play communications program. So far, only two of these are published, although I hear that some others are in the works. One is Words and Action by the Shaftels. (It's really intended for primary grades, but according to the teacher's guide, the material can also be used by younger children.) The other is not published as a program - but it can be used as one: that's Sara Smilansky's monograph on sociodramatic play.

Each of these presents a different type of activity: in Words and Action, there are photos of various open-ended situations. For example, children are

seen fighting over a toy. Children in the class discuss the picture and act out different solutions to the conflict. The Smilansky program involves traditional socio-dramatic play - the teacher sets up a playstore or a clinic and the children improvise in this setting. In both cases the teacher may supply language. For example: she'll introduce words like cashier, cash register, price tag, etc. However the vocabulary learning is not treated as an end in itself. It serves to make the socio-dramatic play or role play possible. (See chart three.)

As we can see, each program defines language in a different way: in the cognitive verbalization programs (and in some of the pattern practice programs) language refers to a rather limited subset of vocabulary and sentence patterns - which we might call the cognitive code. It is used to code certain kinds of information: colors; shapes; sizes; certain polarities like hot, cold; wet, dry, etc.; space relationships; various comparisons; certain kinds of grouping arrangements; and so forth. Bereiter and Englemann have called this the language of the school. It does not, of course, represent the whole range of language or, for that matter, cognitive behavior. And it may not even be very useful to the child outside of school. But there's no doubt that children are called on to verbalize this kind of information in the classroom.

Some programs define language more broadly. The vocabulary includes common nouns and adjectives; action verbs; cultural information, such as the days of the week, common greeting phrases, and so forth. Programs with this definition of language include the discussion-based programs and some of the pattern practice programs - Oral English, ALAP, Language Lotto and much of Peabody. (See chart three, first column.)

There is a third definition of language which we see in the role play programs. Here language is defined as a system of communication strategies: for example, asking for help; getting attention; persuading; winning an argument; negotiating a quarrel; etc. These aspects of language behavior are sometimes overlooked, but as Burton White has pointed out - some children may, in fact, be poor communicators. They may use poor strategies and they may have difficulty in school precisely because they do not know

how to get what they want through language. This is less important in a traditional teacher-dominated setting - but can be crucial in an open classroom where the child has much more responsibility for making his needs known and getting what he requires.

Along with definitions of language - the programs differ in the type of interaction which occurs between teacher and child and among children themselves. In the pattern practice and the cognitive verbalization programs the teacher asks the questions, provides feedback and makes the decisions. (Or, if not the teacher herself, then some other authority figure - such as a voice on a record. See, for example, ALAP and Frost.) The child responds, but does not initiate any of the learning encounters. (I'm talking here about the language components only. In the cognitive programs there is also a problem-solving component and here the child sometimes does have an opportunity to solve problems independently or while interacting with other children.) But in general, the interactions in these programs are between teacher and child, with the teacher in a very dominant position.

In the discussion-based programs, the interaction is still basically between teacher and child, but they become more equal partners. The child's personal experience becomes a legitimate topic of conversation and study. And with this, the power relationships do change. Since the child is the authority on his own experience, he is able to bring new information to the situation and can even legitimately correct the teacher - or at least try to correct her mis-conceptions about himself. This can lead to certain problems: if the child can't communicate his experience well, the conversation may peter out; if others can't relate to his experience, the conversation may degenerate into a monologue. But regardless of the child's actual competence, he is - potentially at least - a more equal participant.

The role play programs rely most heavily on child-to-child interactions. Although the role play situations may be set up by the teacher, it is the children who act them out and it is their interaction which forms the content of the program: in this sense - since they determine much of the actual content - they meet with the teacher as potential equals in the classroom. (Some of this information is summarized on chart five.)

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In choosing a program, we ought to think just as carefully about the type of interaction as we do about the actual language patterns themselves because - in a sense - through the daily interaction - the child is learning the role of learner - what is expected of him in school. We want to be certain that we know exactly what kind of learning relationships are being rewarded in our classrooms and, more important, whether this is the kind of learning behavior that we really want to foster.

I'd like to make one or two other points. These programs do differ in the amount of organization and sequencing provided for the teacher. We have little validated information on how to sequence a language program for young children. And we don't know whether sequencing really affects children's learning or not. But, apart from the child, sequencing may be important for the teacher. As David Weikart has pointed out - it may help her make better day-to-day classroom decisions. In addition, a well-sequenced, highly specific program insures that every child will have at least some minimum contact with the given language models no matter what else happens during the day. The language pattern and cognitive verbalization programs are the most specific and the most highly sequenced. The discussion-based programs are less so: for example, if a child is looking at a picture of a farm it is pretty certain that the discussion will include the names of prominent objects like cow, horse, etc. The discussion may also include names of prominent attributes: for example big barn and little barn. It's less likely that the conversation will spontaneously include terms of logical relationships. For this, the teacher will probably have to remember to probe. If she forgets, there is no specific script to remind her.

Another thing to keep in mind is the amount of information actually given in the teacher's guides. I have grouped the guides into five categories. (See chart four.) Some guides provide what I call extended explanations. These give the teacher detailed explanations of procedures, along with a rationale for each activity and examples of probable student responses. For each incorrect or inadequate response, the guide suggests an appropriate follow-up procedure for the teacher to use. In other words, there is provision for branching within the overall sequencing of the program. (In the examples in chart four, these opportunities for branching are indicated by

the words which I have italicized.) Programs with this type of guide include Smilansky, New Nursery School, Bank Street, Language Lotto, Matrix Games. (See chart two, eighth column.)

A second type of guide provides a script for the teacher, plus examples of probable student response. This type of guide is similar to the extended explanation, except that the teacher is given more explicit language to use. This type of guide provides the same opportunity for branching. Programs with this type guide include: Words and Action, and Lavatelli's Piaget Program. (See chart two.)

The third type of guide provides a script for the teacher, without examples of probable student response. Thus, there is no provision for branching - although the procedures for the basic lesson are very specific. Programs with this type guide include: SRA, Oral English, Peabody, and Distar. (See chart two.)

The fourth type of guide provides a list of topics and some suggested questions for the teacher to use in pursuing the topic, but the procedures are not specifically described. Programs of this type include: the Benefic Press program, ALAP, and the Bowmar program. (See chart two.)

The fifth type of guide provides a list of activities or discussion topics, but does not provide a detailed description of procedures. Nor does it provide a specific set of questions to be used in exploring the activities. The program with this type of guide is Frost. (See chart two.)

Each type of guide gives the teacher a different type of support. The extended explanations and the scripts plus examples of student behavior provide the fullest information: they tell the teacher what to do, what to say, how to proceed when things go wrong and - in the case of the extended explanations - why the activity itself is important. This type is most appropriate for beginning teachers and paraprofessionals. The scripts provide the teacher with exact procedures and exact language. However, these guides seem to assume that children will respond according to the script; there are no examples of unexpected or incorrect student behavior and, along with this, there are no suggestions for branching or remedial teaching procedures. These guides would thus seem less appropriate for beginning teachers or parapro-

fessionals. The last two types are the least appropriate for beginners since they fail to provide any detailed scripts or descriptions of procedures.

Finally, we should keep in mind the fact that each type of program makes a different kind of demand on the teacher. The purely verbal language pattern programs - like Distar and Frost - require that the teacher hold the children's attention primarily with her voice. The children can't move around; there's nothing for them to do except listen and talk. In this kind of situation, the teacher simply has to be a good showman. On the other hand, while she may do less talking in a discussion-based or role play programs, the teacher has to do a lot more organizing and structuring in terms of both goals and procedures. In other words, she has to make many more on-the-spot curriculum decisions. In the end, perhaps the single most important factor in choosing a program is whether the teacher is able to spend the 15 to 30 minutes per day, carrying out the recommended classroom procedures. To some extent, this will depend on the kind of support provided by the teacher's guide and, to some extent, this will depend on her own temperament and skills.

AN ANALYSIS OF PUBLISHED PRESCHOOL LANGUAGE PROGRAMS*

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CHART ONE: LIST OF PROGRAMS

The Effects of Sociodramatic Play on Disadvantaged Pre-school Children. by Sara Smilansky (Smil.) John Wiley & Sons, New York City, 1968. $7.50**

The New Nursery School, by G Nimnicht, O. McAfee, J. Meier (Nurs.) General Learning Corp., New York City, 1969. $16.95.

Learning to Think Series Red Book, by T. G. Thurstone (SRA) Science Research Associates Chicago, 1948, 1967 $26.84.

Early Childhood Discovery Materials, by Bank Street College (Bank) Macmillan. 1968. $27.00 per set.

Words and Action by F. and G. Shaftel. (Shaf.) Holt, Rinehart, Winston, New York City, 1967. $28.00.

Language Lotto by Lassar Gotkin (Lotto) Appleton-Century-Crofts, New York City, 1966. $48.50

Matrix Games by L. Gotkin (Matrix), Appleton-Century-Crofts, New York City, 1967, $58.00.

Experiential Development Program by M Stanek & F. Munson (Benef.), Benefic Press, Chicago, 1966. $70.20.

Oral English by H. A. Thomas & H. B Allen (Oral), Economy Co., Oklahoma City 1968, $104 40

Peabody Language Development Kits, Level P, by Dunn, Horton & Smith. (Peab) American Guidance Service, Circle Pines Minn , 1968, $145.00.

Elaborative Language Series, Primary Set by J. L Frost & R. F Littrell. (Frost) Technifax Education Division, Holyoke, Mass. 1967 $149.00 (15 pupils)

Distar, Language I, by S. Engelmann, J Osborn, T. Engelmann. (Distar) Science Research Associates, Chicago, 1968 9. $165.00

Autosort Language Arts Program, Levels A and B (ALAP). Bell & Howell, Chicago, 1968 $219.00, excluding Language Master machine.

Bowmar Early Childhood Series by Hanes, Woodbridge, Curry, Crume (Bowmar) Bowmar Publishing Corp., Glendale, Calif., 1968 1969. $227.45

Early Childhood Curriculum: A Piaget Program by Celia Stendler Lavatelli (Piaget) American Science & Engineering, Boston, 1970. $292.45.

*Presented at the annual conference of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, Boston, 1970.

**Prices, unless otherwise indicated, are for materials for groups of 20 or more children.

Name	Children's Materials					Teacher's Materials				
	Bks.	Disc. Pics	Manip. Pivs.	k wkbk rcds	other	guide pages	type	Am't of time	Sequence Decisions
Smil						1/161[a]	expl[b]	6 weeks	teacher
Nurs.						7/460	expl	3hr/1yr	teacher
SRA				1/96[a]	96 charts (-)	1/96	script	20min/⅓yr	program
Bank	4[d]	1 art			puzzles	1/48[e]	expl	one month	teacher
Shaf.		20 photo				1/84	script+[f]	unspec	teacher
Lotto					6 games/8 boards per game	1/40	expl	unspec	program
Matrix					20 matrix boards	1/54	expl	unspec	program 1/3 teacher 2/3
Benef.	12	3/176 art		3/96		?	topic & quests.	2[illegible] min/1 yr	program
Oral			562	1/?		1/[illegible]176	script	unspec 64 lessons	program
Peab.		6 art	422		10 misc	1/399	script	40min/ — 180 lessons	(no index) program
Frost				7/132[h]	7 7 filmstrips ? geo. shapes	2/95	topics	unspec.	program
Distar		7/180lsns.[g] 1/61 lsns.		1/18?		1/63	script	30min/180 lsns.	program
ALAP			300[i]			?	topics & quests	10min/42 days	program
Bowmar	30	72 photo			30	2/106	topics & quests.	unspec	(no index) teacher
Piaget					misc.	2/261?	script+	10-20min/3X per wk	

[a] number of books/number of pages (total)
[b] see Chart Six
[c] time per lesson/total time per program
[d] duplicates of 4 books provided
[e] 35 pp are general introduction & are reprinted in guides for all units in program. 13 pp deal with procedures for these specific materials.
[f] see Chart Six
[g] number of bound portfolios/number of pics per portfolio
[h] seven test booklets/total number of test pages (one item per page)
[i] These are Language-Master cards

Preschool Language Program Analysis — CHART THREE: LEARNING ACTIVITIES — Bartlett, p3

Name	Voc. type	Pattern drill (verb.)	Pattern drill (manip.)	Wkbks. (___)	Cogn. process. (manip)(logic)	story & discuss. (non-logic)	role play
Oral	gen.[b]	T[a]	T	T			
Frost	cog.[b]	T					
Distar	cog.	T					
ALAP	gen	T	?				
Peab.	gen/cog[c]	T	T		T	T	
Lotto	gen		C[d]				
SRA	gen			T			
Nurs.	gen/cog[e]		C		C	T[f]	
Matrix	gen				C		
Piaget	cog				T		
Bank	gen.				cg	C	
Benef	gen			T		T	
Bowmar	gen					T	
Smil.	gen						C
Shaf.							T

[a] Activity initiated by the teacher
[b] See Chart Five
[c] Less than 25% is cognitive vocabulary
[d] Children can undertake activity independently
[e] More than 60% cog
[f] A few stories presented for discussion & problem-solving
[g] One temp. seq. puzzle & one jigsaw puzzle

CHART FOUR: TYPES OF TEACHER'S GUIDES

I+ Extended Explanation

Example: The verbalization that goes on while the children are trying to decide what is in the bag offers many opportunities for echoing a child's response and for labeling ... If a child points to a block and says "One dem tings," you can expand his sentence by responding "You think one of the blocks is in the bag." If he jumps up and down shouting, "Cues, cues, cues," and you have no idea what he means, ask him to show you. When he picks up a wooden cube from the table, you can suggest "Open your bag to see if there are cubes in it." If he feels the plastic gear from the gear board.. ..

-from The New Nursery School. Booklet I, p 19 (ital. mine)

Example: Some children who initially respond do not have the picture at all. They usually want all the cards. When the dissimilarity between the child's picture and yours had been pointed out, just repeat, "Who has the stove on his big card?" Eventually the over-anxious child will learn. Other children may not be able to select the correct picture from among the six pictures. These children also need time to learn the skill of scanning....
You can ask, "Jee, do you have the picture of the stove. .?"
If he still cannot find it, point to a couple of pictures...and ask: "Is this a picture of a stove?"

-from Language Lotto, t. guide, p 7 (ital mine)

II. Script plus examples of student behavior

Example: Teacher: Sister, what will you say to your brother?
Enactment
Sister: Put the bag and the milk carton in the garbage can (The brother pretends to place the bag and the carton inside the can.)

If the child playing the little brother's role does not respond, pantomime the actions for him....
Teacher: Fine! We have cleaned up. Now what will happen?
Wait for their responses If they are not forthcoming, review what has happened
Teacher: The groceries are sitting on the sidewalk ..

-from Words and Action, t. guide, p 14 (ital mine)

Example: T: "Today, each of you has a box of small toys Let's...see what you have. Tell me what you find...." (Ask each child in turn to name three of the toys. Supply vocabulary when needed.)

T: (To the child who lines up the toys, or who puts things together on the basis of "belonging"..) "Could this object (spoon) belong with or go with the cup? Is it like the cup in some way? " (If the child rejects the classification, continue ... If he recognizes and names the common property, praise him and continue.)

-from Early Childhood Curriculum, t. guide, p25 (ital mine)

CHART FOUR: TYPES OF TEACHER'S GUIDES (cont.)

III. Script

Example: Group Lesson: On this chart we are going to mark all the pictures of things that have wheels. Look at the first row. (point) Who will mark the pictures of things that have wheels? (Have a child mark the pictures.)
Proceed in this way with the other three rows of pictures Have a different child mark each row.
-Learning to Think Series, t. guide, p 27

Example: Sentence Building Time: Say: Let's pretend that the color chip loops are stones. Each stone has a toy on it. See if each of you can step over your stone two times and name the toy on it in two different ~~xxxx~~ ways Have each child...step over his loop of chips and name the toy using the sentence pattern: This toy is an (airplane). Then he should step back over the loop and name the card again using the sentence pattern: This (airplane)is a toy.
-Peabody Language Development Kits, t. guide, p120

Example: Group Activity: Point to your face and ask a pupil: "Is my face clean?" Help him answer, "Yes, your face is clean." Ask the ~~xxx~~ question of several otherx pupils... ~~X~~ Use the plural nouns teeth, hands, clothes, and shoes with are in the question and have various pupils answer.
-Oral English, t. guide, p 75

IV. A Topic and List of Suggested Questions

Example: Why should I be kind and helpful to my brothers and sisters?
Things to talk about: How are brothers and sisters polite to one another? What are some polite words they should use? (please thank you, etc.) What does it mean to "respect the privacy" or "respect the wishes" of others?....
-Experiential Development Program, A, t. guide, picture 5

Example:(Story title: Let Me See You Try)
Things to talk about: What are some of the things that the children in the story can do? Which of these things have you done? What are some other things you can try? Which do you enjoy the most?

-Bowmar Early Childhood Series, t guide, p 16

V. A Topic or Suggested Activity without suggested procedures or questions

Examples: Activities for Further Development
1. Tour the classroom with the children Identify objects illustrated in the films. Encourage the children to identify objects orally, using complete sentences. ..
2. Discuss ways in which objects in the filmstrips differ from objects of similar function found in your classroom.
3. Over subsequent periods of time, gradually elaborate about common objects found in the classroom Guide children toward learning the function of each.
-Elaborative Language Series, t. guide, pp 10-11

CHART FIVE: CHILDREN'S OPTIONS

Name	initiate & terminate	change course of encounter	pace himself	give response
Smil	X	X	X	X
Nurs.[a]	X	X	X	X
Bank	X	X	X	X
Lotto	X[b]	?[c]	X	X
Matrix	X[b]	?[c]	X	X
ALAP	X[d]		X[d]	X
Shaf		X	X	X
Bowmar		?[e]		X
Benef.		?[e]		X
SRA			X	X
Oral				X
Peab				X
Frost				X
Distar				X
Piaget				X

[a]True of some activities.

[b]Children can eventually learn to play these games independently In the beginning, though, encounters are initiated and terminated by the teacher.

[c]The content of the game responses is controlled by the materials. The children determine order of play and type of question asked.

[d]Children use these materials independently (with Language Master machine) after they have been introduced by teacher.

[e]To some extent, children's responses will determine the course of the discussion activities.